

## Revising with Style

## LESSON 12

## Varying Sentence Closers

You can improve the pacing of your writing, add variety, and heighten the reader's interest by varying your sentence closers. Below are a few common ways to end a sentence.

- **End a sentence with adjectives or adverbs.**

In the driveway was our new car, *clean and sporty red*. (adjectives)

The baby began to take its first steps, *slowly, unsteadily*. (adverbs)

- **End a sentence with a prepositional phrase.**

Reynaldo was in no shape to get up, *not with his aches and fever*.

- **End a sentence with an appositive or appositive phrase.**

The crowd was awed by her performance, *a real show-stopper*.

- **End a sentence with an absolute phrase.**

The lion basked in the African sun, *its tail swishing back and forth*.

- **End a sentence with a participle or participial phrase.**

The children ran alongside the train, *cheering*. (present participle)

We laughed at our faces, *pulled and stretched impossibly in the fun-house mirror*. (past participial phrase)

**EXERCISE A** Each item below begins with a sentence model taken from literature. Combine the sentences that follow into a single sentence that matches the structure of the literature model. You may omit or add words or change word forms as necessary.

**Sample** He stood up against the wall of the drugstore, smoking.

- Ellen sat in the doctor's office.
- She was fidgeting.

James Thurber, "The Secret Life of Walter Mitty"

**Revision** Ellen sat in the doctor's office, fidgeting.

1. She then gave me the pillow, my mother's pillow.

Edwidge Danticat, "Nineteen Thirty-Seven"

- We drove over a hundred miles to the cabin.
- The cabin was our home for the summer.

2. Salzman listened in embarrassed surprise, sensing a sort of apology.

Bernard Malamud, "The Magic Barrel"

- My uncle laughed at his own jokes.
- He was ruining the punch lines.

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3. Over the next year I practiced like this, dutifully in my own way.

Amy Tan, "Two Kinds"

- Celia took charge of the situation.
- She took charge decisively but not offensively.

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4. An uninhabited house of two stories stood at the blind end, detached from its neighbors in a square ground.

James Joyce, "Araby"

- The window washers' scaffold hung near the top of the skyscraper.
- The scaffold was steadied by nothing more than a few guy wires.

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5. It was a hot day, with all the windows and doors open in case a breeze should come.

James Hurst, "The Scarlet Ibis"

- Dad came inside from the bitter cold.
- Icicles were hanging from his moustache and eyebrows.

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**EXERCISE B** Combine the sentences in each item below, using one of the types of sentence closers from the bulleted list. Omit words or change word forms as needed.

1. The defendant stared nervously at the jurors. The defendant was anxious to know their verdict.

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2. The Great Balanzini held his arms out and stepped confidently onto the tightrope. He had a blindfold wrapped snugly around his head.

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3. The creek floods each May. May is a worrisome month for nearby homeowners.

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4. She examined each egg. She was checking for cracks.

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5. Huge cranes moved all about the construction site. They were hauling girders and stacks of bricks.

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6. I can't stop thinking about that movie. It was romantic yet hilarious.

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7. The waiter hurried to our table. Our pizza was held high above his head.

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8. The stream winds for miles through the woods. It ends suddenly in a two-hundred-foot waterfall.

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